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# **Management Audit**

# **King County Elections Operations**

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**Conducted by:**  
**The Election Center and**  
**Strategica, Inc.**  
**October 3, 2005**

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# Audit Objectives

- Primary audit objective was to review election operations and identify opportunities for improved organizational, management, and procedural performance.
  - Audit also presents compilation of professional practices as a guide for enhancing elections operations.
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# Audit Purpose

**Help Restore Voter Confidence  
in the King County Election Process**

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# Key Findings and Recommendations

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# Is Management Structure Effective?

## Audit Findings:

- Management structure could be improved to increase oversight and accountability.

## Audit Recommendations:

- Elevating Elections Section to a division within Department of Executive Services.
  - Recruiting to fill existing vacant mid-level management and supervisory positions.
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# What Facility and Security Investments Are Needed?

## Audit Findings:

- Election facilities are dispersed and inadequate.
- Some additional security measures are needed.

## Audit Recommendations:

- County should acquire or lease a consolidated elections facility for the long-term.
  - Elections Section should implement security upgrades and procedures as soon as possible.
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# What Legal Compliance Issues Should be Addressed?

## Audit Findings:

- Additional bilingual employees and accessible polling sites needed to meet federal requirements.

## Audit Recommendations:

- Recruit additional bilingual employees to work at poll sites on Election Day.
  - Retain a planner to prioritize and plan relocation of accessible poll sites.
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# What Potential Process Issues Could Recur in Future Elections?

## Audit Findings:

- Restrictive state election timeframes invite rushed, error-prone work.

## Audit Recommendations:

- Request legislative changes for
  - ❑ Earlier candidate filing dates;
  - ❑ Earlier primary election date;
  - ❑ Increased canvassing time (28 days); and
  - ❑ Tabulating mail ballots prior to Election Day.



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# What Internal Control Improvements are Needed?

## Audit Findings:

- Insufficient controls to prevent unauthorized printing and use of on-demand ballots.
- DIMS Net modifications not well documented or compatible with data exchange software.

## Audit Recommendations:

- Continue instituting controls for on-demand ballots.
  - Develop procedures to manage DIMS Net changes.
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# What Strategic Issues Should be Considered?

## Audit Findings:

- Current dual balloting process is complex.

## Audit Recommendations:

- County Council should pursue study exploring advantages and disadvantages of:
  - ❑ Voting exclusively by mail;
  - ❑ Combination of voting by mail and operating regional voting centers; and
  - ❑ Maintaining status quo.

# How Can Public Trust be Restored?

## Audit Findings:

- Steps already taken to prevent future breakdowns.
- Conducting one or two elections with no breakdowns critical to restoring public trust.

## Audit Recommendations:

- Actively open operations to media scrutiny.
- Enlist policy-makers to become actively involved in the election process.
- Address legal, structural and operational impediments to effective election operations.

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# Appendix 1

- Appendix 1 of the audit provides summary of procedural breakdowns that occurred in prior elections and cited in Council Motion 12107.
  - Procedural and process improvements implemented by the Elections Section following the 2004 elections.
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# Procedural and Process Breakdowns Addressed Following the 2004 Elections

- Uncounted ballots found after election certified
  - Incomplete, incorrect, or missing voter signatures in voter registration database
  - Voter registrations issued for felons and former felons whose civil rights were not officially restored
  - Reconciliation of votes cast with voters credited
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# Procedural and Process Breakdowns Addressed Following the 2004 Elections

- Preparing and documenting Mail Ballot Report during certification
  - Provisional ballots incorrectly inserted into AccuVote machines
  - Untimely mailing of absentee ballots and other ballot mailing errors
  - Ballot reconciliation and accounting of ballots printed on demand
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  - In addition, we are grateful for the professional audit assistance provided by the King County Auditor's Office management and staff throughout the audit process.
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